

LIBRARY
OF THE
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
GIVEN BY

THE SLAVES.





THE SLAVES;

A POEM.

WRITTEN BY APPOINTMENT OF THE FACULTY
OF THE WESTERN RESERVE COLLEGE, FOR THE
COMMENCEMENT, IN 1831.

BY JAMES B. WALKER,

.....
HUDSON—OHIO;

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE OHIO OBSERVER,
1835.

CAGE

E 449

W 1848

1835

150,046

11116 5 25 46

Dedication.

To John Rankin,

Merchant, New York City.

I dedicate to you, sir, the following pages,
for the simple reason, that I do not believe I could
please God so well by dedicating them to any other
man.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

The following poem was written by appointment of the Faculty of the Western Reserve College, for Commencement in 1831—At a period when the subject of immediate emancipation was not discussed in the west. It contains the views we have always had of the sinfulness of Slavery, and of the moral obligation resting upon slave-holders to let the oppressed go free. It urges the duty of those who claim to be the friends of humanity, or the friends of the Savior to aid, as well in relieving the slaveholder from the heart-petrifying influences of Slavery, as in relieving his victim from the thralldom of his task master. We publish the poem at this time to convince some of our friends, who seem to think otherwise, that we look upon the *whole system of Slavery* now, just as we have always viewed it, with feelings of abhorrence.

But while we say that our feelings in relation to *slavery itself* have remained the same—we freely admit, that our views in regard to the best means of destroying the pernicious system have changed. This we believe to be the case to some extent with every man who has thought on this subject with the least degree of attention, during the last three years. We once hoped that Colonization in Africa would remedy the evil, and with that hope we urged forward so far as our limited means and time would permit, the Colonization scheme. We now believe, what is conceded by all parties, that as a means of destroying slavery, Colonization is altogether an inefficient and inadequate remedy. To Colonization for Christian purposes, and from Christian motives, we are not opposed. On the contrary we are favorable to the plan of settling Christian colonies on the African coast, to facilitate missionary operations in the interior, and to prevent the slave trade on the coast; but in this case we do regard the color of the colonists as so essential as their character

As a remedy for slavery our hopes are now, where they always should have been, *in the Gospel*. We look at the means which God has appointed to destroy the power of sin, as the only means adequate to accomplish the end—namely—the Truth plainly, pointedly, and unreservedly urged upon the conscience, in connection with the direct duty which God has imposed, and which man ought not to alter, or modify at his peril, of immediate submission to its requirements. Truth is the only corrective for error. Urge it upon individual slave-holders, and when the views of the slave-holders, as individuals, are corrected, they will correct the laws of the slave-holding States, and not before. The reasons for urging on to this result are growing weightier every day.

To this result, things must come at last, and the sooner the better for all parties concerned. God has so constituted nature, that if a people are oppressed, their ratio of increase by natural generation will be so much greater than that of their oppressors, that the slaves must eventually become the masters. And it is universally the case that as the consummation approaches, the masters endeavor by more cruel laws, and greater degrees of oppression, to bind down the slaves. It was so before the liberation of the Children of Israel, when they were slaves in Egypt—it is so now in our Southern States—Hence the necessity that what we do, we should do quickly; because the evil is approaching a crisis, when it may be too late to save our slave holding brethren from the fate of Pharaoh's host.—On the other hand, immediate action is necessary that the slaves may be saved from the operations of those inhuman laws, which are always enacted in such a stage of the evil.

Immediate action is necessary to prevent the slave holders from hardening themselves in crime, and thereby rendering their salvation less hopeful. It was given in evidence before to British Parliament, that a young man of humane disposition, after being on a slave plantation a few years, became so barbarized in heart, that he could lash an old hoary-headed man, until blood ran from his shoulders to his feet; this he could do without

any manifestations of feeling, although the old man prayed for mercy at every blow. It is the ordination of God, that sin, the longer it is indulged, hardens in a greater degree the heart; and in view of this fact, duty to the slaveholders requires that we should endeavor, as we do in the case of other sinners, to rid them of that sin, which is every day preparing them for hell.—On the other hand we should endeavor to release the slaves from that system which is darkening their understandings, corrupting their morals, and rendering them every day more and more unfit for emancipation. And thus the longer the evil continues it not only increases the number to be emancipated and christianized, but it also renders the work more difficult.

We should urge immediate emancipation because an amalgamation of the two races is now going forward rapidly in the slave states. Every man who has visited the slave states knows that a large proportion of the children born bear upon their foreheads the marks of amalgamation—and nothing but emancipation can stop the progress of this evil.

We should urge immediate emancipation because our christian brethren at the south desire we should do so. It is a mistake to suppose that the whole south are opposed to emancipation. Very many, if not a majority of the truly pious in Virginia and Kentucky, desire that slavery should cease this hour. Among our exchange list, strange as it may seem, we find but few papers that speak out so plainly on the subject of slavery as the Western Luminary, in Kentucky, and the St. Louis Observer, in Missouri.

We should urge immediate emancipation because the safety of our Southern brethren depend upon it. When a Boa Constrictor wraps his fearful coils round a traveller, it is said that every effort of the snake diminishes the strength of its victim, and although the man's arm may have strength enough to hold the head of the serpent off from his bosom for a time, yet as his strength diminishes and the serpent's encreases, the fatal blow must finally be struck, unless some friend relieve him from his perilous situation.

We should urge the abolition of slavery now, because every day the evil is increasing, and that increase is in a geometrical progression. There will probably be the next year, twenty thousand more to emancipate—to educate and Christianize, than there is this year—bating what little may be done to forward this object under existing circumstances. And should emancipation not take place till the next census, our colored population will amount to more than three millions. Now we tell a sinner that it is folly to put off repentance because the difficulty encreases every day. Is not this an analagous case? Is it not folly to defer emancipation, when the thing must done, and the difficulty of doing it every day encreases?—If a large stone rested upon a man's house, which was encreasing in weight every day, and which must eventually be removed, or crush the building upon the inmates—is this man wise to defer moving the stone, when every day the danger is encreasing, and every day he is becoming less able to remove it.

We need to labor and pray in behalf of the injured Africans that we may not become, as a people, a “bye word and a hissing” with every civilized nation of the earth; and that we may not be found guilty of hypocrisy in the sight of God.—At present we sacrifice the lives of our missionaries, and spend thousands to send the Gospel to the Africans in another quarter of the globe, and yet refuse it to the Africans at home. We pass resolutions to give the Word of Life to all the destitute in the United States that will receive it—We say that the work is done—while yet the poor colored man who would have received it gladly and blessed God for the gift, and who is the most needy, has been denied the word of God. We gather the children of the heathen into schools, at a great expense of labor and money, and yet will not permit the colored children at home to be educated. We profess to be zealously affected to do the heathen good, and yet when God has brought those very heathen and scattered them in our midst, we neglect them—chain them—shut the light of the Blessed Gospel from their mind, and trample their souls and bodies under our feet.—Would it be strange, if God in

view of such unblushing inconsistency, would thwart our plans, send death among our missionaries, and withhold his blessing, until we go forth as the disciples were commanded to do, to preach the gospel to all the world, *beginning at Jerusalem*.

We should urge immediate emancipation, because the gospel requires us to do unto others as we would have others do unto us, in like circumstances. Because it requires us, as we love the Savior, to love and to aid those of our race who most need kindness and aid.

We think that every Christian who is not slow to understand the providences of God, can discover in the signs of these time indications of the speedy abolition of slavery. Every thing that hinders the progress of the gospel must be removed out of the way. The means which God will use to accomplish the removal of slavery, will undoubtedly be the same that He uses in all other cases—the agency of his people and the instrumentality of the Truth, rendered mighty through the power of the Holy Ghost. In this as in every other great moral enterprise he will raise up his own agents—shed light upon their understanding in relation to the best modes of accomplishing the end; and strengthen them to bear the rebuke of the luke warm, and the opposition of the ungodly, which always attend, for a time, the efforts of those who fearlessly tell men their sins, and require that they should immediately forsake them.

When clearer light is thus shed upon the path of duty, is it inconsistent to adopt the means which are thus pointed out as effectual to the accomplishment of the desired end. Is it inconsistent to throw one'sself into the plans of the Almighty, and be co-workers with him by endeavoring to remove the barriers which hinder the spread of the gospel. We think not. The man who heartily desires that a good object may be accomplished, will adopt any means which commend themselves as being approved of God, and adapted to accomplish the end in view. If the charge of inconsistency be true of any individual, it is true of that man who pertinaciously adheres to preformed opinions, after those opinions have been found er-

roneous or dangerous. Such are charged with inconsistency by their own consciences, and will be found guilty before a higher tribunal than that of public opinion. We sometimes find individuals, who standing connected with the church, and knowing that they are committed on the side of holiness, seem to feel uneasy and opposed whenever any active measures are adopted by their brethren, to go forward and destroy some stronghold of Satan. To use a homely illustration they might be called the wheel horses in car of salvation; better adapted to hold back than move forward. And when the leaders, full of generous impulses draw both them and the car onward, they plant their feet and shake their heads, and although they move on behind; they resist as much as they dare at every step. Exasperated at length that they are continually dragged on by the lead horses, and not daring to stop lest the car should run over them, they finally manifest their ill nature by biting the tails of the forward horses, until it becomes necessary to harness them into an opposition line.

When the following poem was written no objection was alledged against it on account of strong or denunciatory language. Of its many defects such language was never mentioned as one. On the contrary; many strong words and phrases in the manuscript, over which milder ones were written as a choice, have the pencil marks of the late President Storrs, approving the former. If then the language and spirit of the poem were approved by the learned and the pious when the public mind was not excited by party feeling nor biassed by prejudice, surely the same language can not form an objection now, unless that objection arise from some such state of mind as those referred to above.

Thus have we given a view of what now is and ever has been our feelings in relation to slavery. We are "for principles and not men." And we desire to act, and will act with every association of our brethren by whatever name they may be called, whether "Anti-Slavery men" or "Union men," *provided always*, that their object be to use the means immediately to free the slave holders

and the slaves from the soul destroying influences of the American Slave System.

The following poem stands as it was spoken, with the exception of a few verbal alterations. The two last lines have been stricken off, and a passage of Scripture appended, which is a better application than can be expressed in uninspired language. The poem was written by one, who never having had much time to dally with the muses, is consequently not much of a favorite with their Ladyships. It was written to excite sympathy in behalf of the guiltless poor. It is now printed with the hope that it may effect the same object; and we commend it to the charity and attention of the friends of Universal Emancipation.

THE SLAVES.

'Twas morning in Angola—and the sun
Wheeled up the heavens, but his fiery disk
Portended that meridian hours would bring
Dense heat upon the Tropics. The long palm
And the banana leaves, were bathed in dew,—
The drops were heavy, and as sun-light fell
Upon the chrystals, they blazed out in points
Of sparkling light—then glittered in the blaze
And quivered for a moment, and were gone.
The spice trees were all smoking in the heat;
And as the haze was rising o'er the woodlands,
You might see the gazell and jerboa
Bound away to hide them in the thicket.

Amid this scene, upon a sloping hill,
Skirted by a small stream, that poured its tide
Into the river Zaire, five negro huts
Were seen, amid the rows of the red orange
And the pine-apple. Here, a young man
Whose courage in the chase had won him friends,
Had come to dwell;—here dwelt his aged parents,
And his wife, who was a chieftain's daughter,
And whose life was hid within his bosom.
Think ye their love was cold, because the sun
Had dyed a deeper stain upon their skin?
Oh no! the coldness and the guilt that lurk
In whiter bosoms, had not come to them.
They lived but for each other—and their hearts,
Warmed by the ardor of their own hot clime,
Heaved deeper, and their pulses told their beats
With flushed and stronger fervor. They went forth
This morning on the margin of the stream.
His comrades had gone early to the chase—

And his ag'd sire was spreading out a net
 Beneath the waters. An old woman stood
 Upon the bank, and held a laughing boy:—
 It was his son and mother. All loved the child,
 And Ethiopia's limits scarce contained
 A group of happier mortals. While their boy
 Ran forth to meet them, think ye that the heart
 Of that dark mother did not feel a thrill
 Of mothers' love? Did not the father's brow
 Relax to tenderness to see his wife
 Caress their mutual fav'rite?—They dreamed not
 That harm was near them;—they had only heard
 That often tiger-men came from the sea
 Whose skin was white as the cocoa's milk,
 But their hearts' hue was dark as ebony.

They stood t'await their aged parent's bark
 Which neared the shore. But the white man was near.
 Two villains lurked for human flesh and blood
 A little distant. And fearing they might fail
 In grappling with their victims, they had planned
 To murder those in age, and seize the time
 Of gen'ral consternation, to fulfil
 Their deadly purpose! * * * *

Now a sudden peal
 Startles the air. Their father leaps, and falls,
 And struggles frightfully! They stand aghast:
 But Imar waiting not, plunged in the stream—
 He dashed the waves aside with sinewy arm,
 Until he reached the vessel. Th' old man lay
 Struggling with death—his life-blood flowing out,
 As each convulsion shook his aged limbs.
 Imar looked on as tho' some fearful spell
 Was in his vision. Confusion filled his mind,
 As all its powers were strained to catch the cause
 Of so much horror. At length the tho't--THE WHITE-MEN,
 Crossed his mind, and a loud scream now reached him!
 See, his wife is struggling as the white-man draws
 The cord around her straining arms forced back!
 Can I describe the feelings of his soul?

Such feelings have no language—they are dumb.
He forced his boat towards the shore—then stopped,
And thought of flying to secure more aid.
The white men fearing they should lose their prey,
Devised most fiendish measures to induce
Their victim onward. First they seized his boy,
And scourged him till the infant groaned with pain.
The father gazed, and stood with straining eyes;—
His blood ran boiling to his brain; but still
He stood transfixed:—The white-men took a knife,
And gashed the bosom of the negro's wife!
Imar looked on the deed. She would have fall'n,
For pain and fear and anguish broke her heart;
But they sustained her, till her husband saw
Her wounded bosom, stained with her own blood!
They thus had judged—he has a fearless heart,
And cruel acts upon his wife will raise
A frenzy that will bring him to her aid.
They rightly judged:—He gave a sudden leap,
And like a raging maniac sought the shore.
Have you e'er seen a raging fire choked up,
Until the heat augmenting burst its way
In startling flames? Or have you seen a stream
Obstructed till its waters gath'ring power,
Dash on with violence? With Imar thus;
His passions had been staid about his heart,
Until they rose to desperation. O,
If on this earth there be a thing of strange
And stirring terror—it is man controlled
By desp'rate passions, that reck not of death.
Imar sprang on the white-man who stood near,
To break him piecemeal, and to cast his heart,
His guilty heart, t' the vultures; but a blow
From th' other wretch, who opportunely stood,
Felled him to earth. There lay a manly heart,
A martyr to the love he bore a wife
And her young offspring. He lay upon the earth
Before the white-men, miscreants who lurk
For slaves in Seno Gambia. Oh, he was brave,

But now he lay subdued. He who was free
 As the young leopard—soon to be a slave!
 There stood the white-men, leaning o'er their prey,
 Waiting return of life, that they might drive
 Their victims to the slave ship. He revived—
 His passions had abated, and he seemed
 Lost to his cruel wrongs, till Mem'ry came,
 And brought a pang—a thrill of utter woe!
 As tho' a reptile's pois'nous tooth had cut
 Some tender nerve that vibrates in the heart.
 The white-men fear his comrades may be near—
 But still nor stripes nor cruelty could move
 Their victim on. But now they loose his wife,
 And give her sobbing child into her arms,
 And drive her forward. Now her groans of grief,
 Like an unearthly being—hopeless—lost—
 And the deep wailing of her stricken boy.
 (Who saw that bosom where he had reposed
 In happiness so oft, now stained with blood,)—
 Fell on the *husband's* and the *father's* ear.
 He rose and followed them, to die a slave
 With all he loved on earth, or rescue them
 From cruel bondage, by some desp'rate act
 Of awful vengeance. But alas, how vain!
 The hands of Imar, that brave, guiltless man,
 Were fettered like a murderer—while those
 Who had committed such inhuman deeds,
 Were free to scourge him. O, if Justice reigns
 In the high heavens, such incarnate fiends
 Shall call upon the rocks to hide their souls
 From Him who of one blood made all mankind!

They drove them onward to the prison ship—
 They'd traveled fast, and now the mid-day sun
 Was pouring down a flood of ardent heat,
 And the young wife of Imar, struggling on,
 Was fainting with her burden. Her poor boy
 Forgot his sorrows, and had sunk to rest
 Upon her wounded bosom. She'd not been
 Accustomed to the harder toils of life,—

Her chieftain father loved Delmina well—
 And she had sat within his spreading tent,
 The daughter of his favor. Now fatigue
 And toil and misery, weighed her to the earth;—
 She sunk upon the ground, and raised her eyes
 Upon her husband, with a look so fraught
 With tenderness and supplication strong,
 That the hard hearts of the white-men were touched
 With so much woe. They saw her strength was gone
 And chaining Imar there beneath a shade,
 They hastened to the ship for aid to bear
 Her onward to the vessel. There they sat—
 They who at morn had been so nobly free,
 Now chained for slaves! They sat together—
 And the thoughts that came across their bosoms
 Never can be told, * * * *

At length Delmina pressed
 Her severed lips upon her infant's brow;
 Maternal love had risen o'er her griefs,
 And now she wept.—But Imar could not weep;
 His hand was on his chain, and firmly grasped—
 His brow was gathered, and his eye transfixed
 Upon the ground. And when his wife leaned down
 And laid her aching head upon his breast,
 He heeded not. His mind was wrapped in thought
 That stretched into the future, and took hold
 On misery. So when the white-men came,
 And bound Delmina's wounded breast, and bore
 Her on, he walked composed and sternly forth
 Near by her side, until they reached the ship.

And who can tell the horrors of that place,
 The middle passage of a ship of slaves!
 'Tis full of human wretchedness—for there
 Are beings without hope in earth or heaven—
 A place of wounds, and woes, and broken hearts,
 And utter desolation of the soul!

That ship came o'er the Ocean, and those slaves
 Were landed in the country of the free;—

'Tis many years ago, and some are dead,
 And most of them are old men now. They came
 To our own happy climate. But strange to tell,
 The country where the weary find a rest
 From misrule and oppression, was to them
 A place of cruel bondage! And those fiends,
 Those angels of the devil, who had broken
 The laws of the high heavens and the earth,
 And stolen their fellow men from home and peace,
 And sold them to be scourged and driv'n for slaves,
 Found men to shelter them in this our land,—
 Nor only shelter them, but men to buy
 The bodies of their victims! Yes, Imar
 And his young wife and child, were made to stand
 In the slave market. And the white-men came,
 And talked of them as they would talk of beasts
 Of burden. Yes, and there were men who bore
 Our common features, talking of the price
 Of human beings. And a price was paid—
 And Imar and Delmina and her child,
 Whose hearts had ever loved each other well,
 Were torn asunder, to drag out their lives
 In wretchedness and labor, and to bend
 Beneath the lash; and feel their bodies galled
 With cruel stripes!

Columbia, my loved home,
 Honored of earth! Can it be thus—that those
 Who are oppressed and burdened with their wrongs,
 Find no relief from thee,—and yet that they
 Who oppress the innocent, are free to boast
 Of thy protection?

Imar now is old,
 And she who was his young companion once,
 Has gone down to the earth. He had not known
 The end of all her sufferings: But one day,
 A tall young slave was driven to the field
 To labor with him. He was lately bought,
 And told the story of his mother's wrongs—
That mother was Delmina! He, her son,

Had seen his mother die; and when she died,
 She spoke of Imar. Often in her life,
 When it was night, and th' keepers were asleep,
 She stole an hour from the appointed rest,
 To talk of their young days—their happiness,—
 And said if she could see him on the earth,
 She'd rest in peace.

The old man hid his face
 Upon his hands. Feeling o'ercame him,
 As the thought of her he loved, her life and death,
 Came in upon his heart. He took the hand
 Of the young man, and wept. * * *

The driver came
 With heartless sneer, and struck them with a scourge,
 And drove them to their toil. Tell me, ye sons
 Of free America; ye virtuous fair;
 Young men in Zion; Maidens in the church;
 Ye Christians—ye beloved of the Lord,—
 Will ye not rise, with active zeal, to aid
 The oppressed Africans?

Remember, Christians, what the Savior saith—
 And mark the basis of the judgment passed
 When God shall try the soul:—

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,
 Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom
 prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For
 I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty,
 and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took
 me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye
 visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying—Lord!
 when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty,
 and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger,
 and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when
 saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Ver-
 ily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto
 one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it
 unto me.

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand,
 Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, pre-
 pared for the devil and his angels: For I was a hun-

gered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

“Then shall they also answer him, saying—Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

“Then shall he answer them, saying—Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

THE END.

